

CANONMALLY

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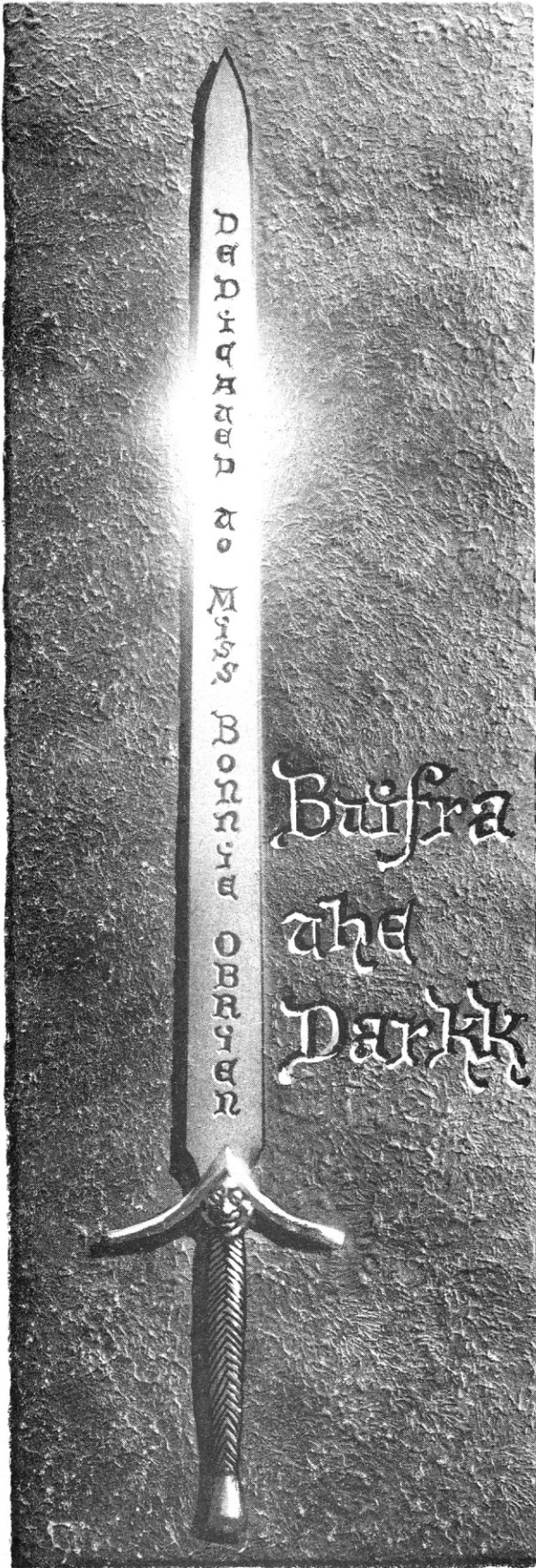


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SANDS OF QUANAM

BY STANLEY S. WIATER

ART BY RICHARD CORBEN



The never ending waves smashed against the jagged, wind and water worn rocks. Again and again the churning water rose, only to fall and die on the debris littered beach. Each dying wave left a reminder of itself on the wet sand; here a torn piece of clothing, there a ruined plank or keg. The bright morning sun revealed little to view, save for a few crabs and sand spiders that were clambering over the corpses which also occupied space on the shore side.

There was but a single figure moving amongst the many still and bloated bodies that lay mixed with the assorted debris and wreckage. Dressed in the simple harness of a warrior, his dark grey cloak did not show him to be of any specific tribe or kingdom. It was his raven black hair and ironite colored eyes that told he was from the continent of Zambot, and that he was not a native of this land. He was young in age, but his tall form with lean physique was equal in strength to any man twice his age.

This was because he was no so-called civilized man, bred on wine and sweetmeats, and long grown weak of mind and body. No, this was a true barbarian, born with a sword in his hands and an unquenchable fire in his eyes. Although large in stature for his age, he carried not an ounce of unnecessary weight upon his pantherish form. His long black hair was kept from falling in his eyes by a thin band of copperan almost the same color as his sun darkened skin. A broadsword and a jeweled dagger scabbarded about his waist were the only possessions of mention he now owned.

Buifra the Darkk slowly took in the grim sights that lay on the beach before him. Having little else to do, he began to check the numerous bodies for signs of life. He already knew, however, that they must be all dead. He could not remember much of the actual shipwreck, but he recalled well the storm that had raged for three days and nights. He soon counted sixteen bodies that he had examined, one by one, to see if any still lived. He was the only survivor.

Looking seaward, Buifra scanned the towering rocks the ship had collided with and sank against during the height of the storm. There was nothing left of the storm they had encountered, and that same amount was all that remained of the ship that had brought him here. He felt for the ironite broadsword that never left his side. As always, it was still scabbarded to his waist, alongside the dagger. But as to how the cumbersome weapons had made it through the collision and swim to shore with him, Buifra did not give time to think.

He then noted the several black fins that were neatly cutting through the blood darkened waters. There would be no more bodies to be washed up on shore. Again the reminder that he was the sole survivor of a crew of twenty hit him like a hard slap across the face. The storm and the devils of the deep had seen to that.

The red sun burned down from the cloudless sky, and Buifra's parched throat soon felt its effect. He would have to find fresh water if he were to survive for even a day. In one direction, there was the salt filled sea. And in every other direction, he could see nothing but sand and rocks, stretching up and down the sea coast as far as he could see. It was the same inland, only with more sand than rocks. He almost wished that he could join his dead companions.

He had thrown in his lot with them, a group of adventurers, to go on a voyage across the Octin Ocean to the city of Kiva, which was on the southern continent of Quanam. Buifra had had no real reason for signing on as a crewmember of one of the four ships making the voyage to Kiva, save for the fact that he was broke as usual. Also, the thought of becoming rich in a strange and relatively unknown and unexplored land had appealed strongly to the young barbarian, who had become bored with his occupation as a thief on Clomyth.

The eight hundred mile voyage from the continent of Clomyth to Quanam was not expected to be without incidents of trouble, but for ten days it was just that. It was on the eleventh day out to sea that the storm struck. The four ships were quickly lost from sight of each other, and it was anyone's guess whether they were still on course or not. Buifra had seen storms before, but this one was more furious than any he had ever seen or heard of. It was as if the gods of the water and the sky had locked together in immortal combat.

During the third night of the storm, Buifra had sighted land, as he had volunteered to be on the lookout tower at the time. But although he could see the rocky monoliths that jutted out of the raging waters ahead of the ship, nothing he could say or do could prevent their crashing upon them. The ship was instantly crushed to kindling against the stone barriers, and it was only by some miracle of fate or the gods that he had been thrown free of the wreckage by the initial collision. Now there was nothing left of his friends and that ship but sixteen bloated corpses and a few boards and planks.

There was yet the possibility that one or two of the other ships had survived the storm and had made it to Kiva. Buifra could only pray that this was so. Meanwhile, he had to make it to Kiva himself. He was alone, without food or water, on a strange and unknown continent, that of Quanam. This was his present situation, and Buifra knew it was not a joyous one. But he was Buifra the Darkk, a warrior, and he would survive. Of that he had no doubts.

Surveying the barren terrain, Buifra figured that Kiva was somewhere to the north of him. There was nothing he could accomplish by remaining here, although he could not even guess how far north Kiva might be. Venomously cursing his luck, he resigned his fate to Gaaf and whatever gods he believed or half believed in.

Then, without a backward glance, the lone barbarian began his long walk up the coastline of eternal Quanam, largest land mass on all of Omentis. It was to be a memorable journey.

Buifra had not traveled far when he thought he heard something moving behind a group of rocks that lay before him.

"Who or what goes there?" he challenged, his broadsword shooting forth from its scabbard. "I command you to show yourself."

For the space of a few heartbeats, there was only silence. Then, from behind a large boulder came a single figure, completely swathed from head to foot in decaying white cloth and cloak. At least, the cloak had at one time been white, as it now was yellowed with what appeared to be incredible age or usage. Totally enveloped by the cloak, there was nothing upon him that was not covered or hidden by the thick material. Apparently it was to protect him both from the desert heat of the day and the chilling cold of the night.

Buifra recognized him at once to be a desert nomad, but of what tribe, nationality or race, he was unable to tell. The cloak and other garments covered the figure so well that his only distinguishing feature was that he was slightly taller than the barbarian. And Buifra stood, for all his young age, well over six feet, six inches, in height.

"Sheathe your weapon," rasped the face hidden nomad, "I carry no weapons, nor do I desire to harm thee." His cloak covered arms hung limply at his sides. Buifra lowered his sword, but as was his custom, did not scabbard it as he had been asked. He was not as yet convinced that the mysterious figure who stood in front of him would not be of any danger. It was the same feeling he had toward everyone, but it was a habit that helped keep him alive.

"What are you doing here?" Buifra asked uneasily, keeping a safe distance away from the one he had spoken to. It was not easy for him to understand the guttural speech of the Quanamic nomad, but a member of the crew had taught him enough of the language to be understood and to understand what was said to him.

"My name is Lamm Ameb," answered the nomad, bowing his hidden form to Buifra. "I was scouting for a caravan when a sand storm separated me from my companions. Becoming lost in the midst of the storm, my horse threw me a few miles back." He pointed to some featureless sand dunes in the distance. "I heard waves breaking upon the rocks and came here to see what I could find. As you can see, all my provisions were attached to my horse and thus lost. And, unfortunately, one cannot drink the salted waters of the sea.





But who be you, who speaks with such a barbaric accent? I see that you have the trappings of a warrior, but surely you cannot be of Quanam?"

"No," replied Buifra, idly fingering the yellowite hilt of his sword, "I was shipwrecked last evening on this accursed shore, the sole survivor of the crew. Doubtless the same storm that brought me here separated you from your caravan. I am known as Buifra, Buifra the Darkk. I'm a mercenary traveling from far Zamobt and I was bound for the city of Kiva. Do you know where we are in relation to its location?"

The young barbarian then scabbarded his sword, hoping that this action would make Lamm Ameb feel easier to speak. It was obvious that he couldn't be of any harm to Buifra or anyone else.

"The city you seek lies two days journey to the north," answered Lamm Ameb solemnly. "But as you know, the salt water of the ocean cannot be drank, and neither of us is with provisions. Yet we need not worry, for before I was separated from the caravan, I had almost reached a little known oasis. If my thinking is correct, it is but a half a day's journey inland from where we now stand."

As he had listened, Buifra ran his hand over cracked and blistered lips. He had not forgotten his attempt to dampen his burning throat with the salty water, succeeding only in wetting his lips and making him even thirstier than he had been before. Now this talk of an oasis nearly had him quivering with expectation. He urged Ameb to go on.

"I see that I do not need to ask twice the question of your accompanying me to the oasis. So be it. I will be glad to take you there. I'll also need protection from the fierce desert wolves, as we Zuttites carry all our weapons upon our horses instead of on our persons."

The Darkk thought it a strange and perhaps unwise tradition that the nomadic Zuttites of Quanam did not carry any weapons on their person. But as he did not wish to show his youthful ignorance of such matters, he said nothing about it. He knew nothing of the ways of the Zuttites, yet he still thought it odd that Lamm Ameb covered his body with so much unneeded material. He couldn't help but stare, nor could he prevent himself from having the nomad notice his staring.

"You will forgive me if I don't show you my face," said Lamm Ameb, "but a recent affliction of the skin makes it imperative that the harsh rays of the sun do not touch upon my flesh. But do you still wish to accompany me? For the sun is at its zenith, and if we depart now, we can reach the oasis by nightfall."

"A man must have water," replied Buifra, his mouth feeling like a bowl of dried clay. "And where there is water,

there is most likely food of some sort. Lead on then, for we must have both if we are ever to reach Kiva."

Positioning his cloak over his head to protect his face from the searing rays of the red sun of Omentis, Buifra then checked the placement of his ironite broadsword and dagger. They were sharp as ever and could be grasped in practically a moment's thought. He was ready now for anything.

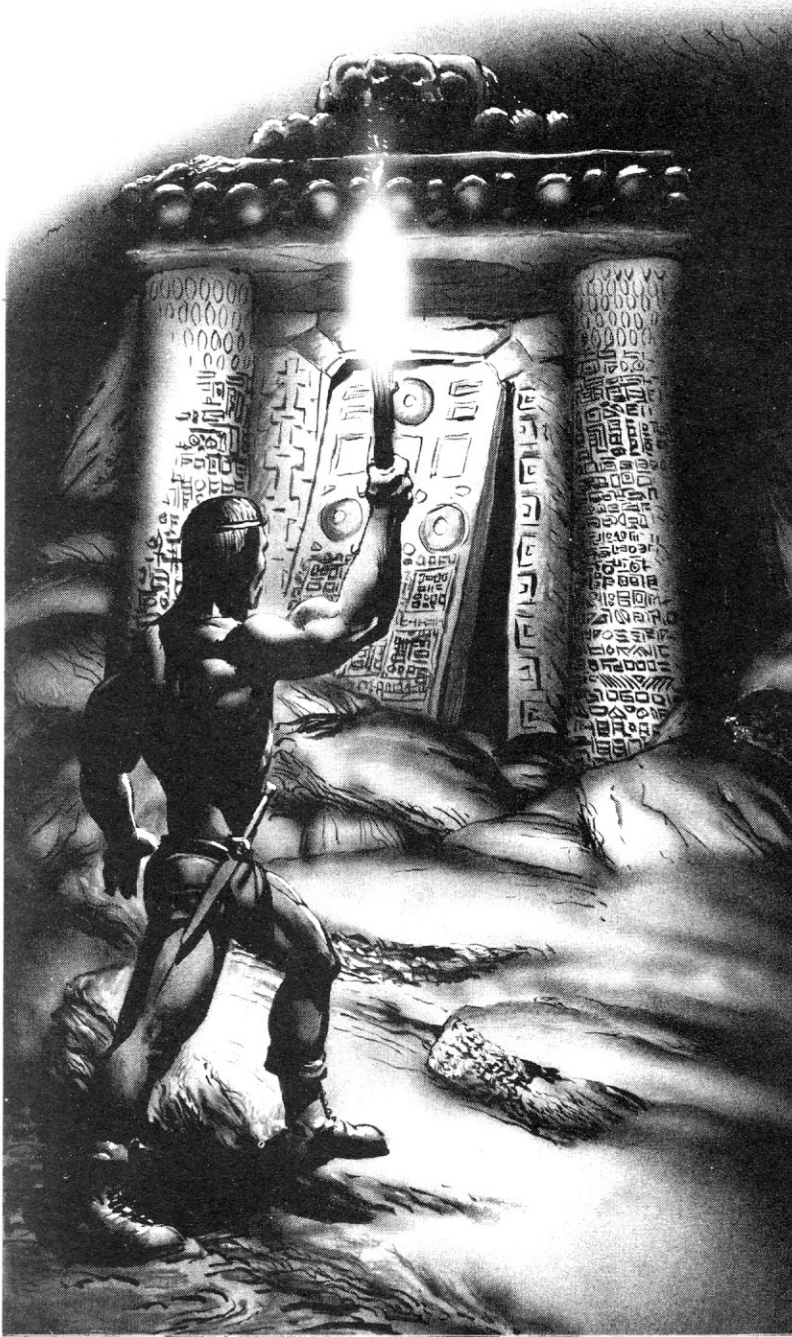
Glancing up at the fiery orb that hung overhead, the young barbarian was reminded of the single red eye of a species of devil-apes that he had once encountered a few years ago. A trio of the four-armed beasts had attacked him while he had been hunting in his native country of Zambot, and he had dispatched them all without receiving a scratch. He had been but fifteen years old at the time, and he was not much older now.

Looking away from the sun, Buifra fell in step behind the Zuttite, who already was disappearing over the closest sand dune. As he did so, he felt the sand steaming beneath his booted feet. If not well known, the Quanamic deserts of death were at least well named.



Buifra cursed to himself as he tried to keep up with the swiftly moving Zuttite. He could not understand how Lamm Ameb could keep such a steady pace in the oppressing heat. It did not even appear that Ameb was breathing hard. Still, Buifra realized that the nomad had lived in this climate all his life, and therefore had become accustomed to the heat. Stumbling into an unseen pocket of sand, Buifra fell to his knees with a noise that was half a gasp and half a curse. The sand burned his hands and unprotected knees. The heat of the late afternoon sun was as intense as it had ever been, and Buifra thought he would go mad if he did not have water or shade soon. As he fell again after just regaining his balance, the Darkk wished he had never acquired this seemingly incurable wanderlust of his.

Without a look behind him or speaking a single word, Lamm Ameb glided across another barren dune of sand. On his feet once more, the exhausted barbarian lumbered on to stay up with him. It was far from easy, but it was done. For Buifra had never been beaten by man or beast before, and he was not going to let that happen now. Again he stumbled and reeled, but this time, did not fall.



The sun had set but a few minutes when Buifra first saw the date trees swaying in the distance. There were only a half dozen of them, growing beside a small lake, but they were a welcome sign of food for the taking. Buifra was glad to see them, as even a barbarian couldn't have lasted much longer without food or drink. Never accustomed before to

such exposure to the sun and heat, he could feel the sunburnt skin peeling from the areas of his body that had not been covered by his cloak. The cooling night breeze did little to ease the burning, but Buifra had other things on his mind to worry about.

One thought which amazed and mystified him was the dexterity of Lamm Ameb, who stood a short distance ahead of him. The Zuttite had not spoken a single word since their first meeting, but Buifra was not offended by his silence. He was only relieved to know that the nomad had led them straight to the oasis as he had said he would.

The two moons had both risen, casting their pale fingers of silvery light upon the water and trees. Pulling off his dust caked cloak, Buifra rushed past the Zuttite and dived headlong into the clear water when he finally reached the oasis. He was underwater for some minutes, then he came up to the surface again, laughing, while at the same time coughing on the water that had gotten into his lungs. The Zuttite said nothing, but stood silently by the side of the lake.

"Drink your fill, man," cried Buifra, the moon lit water reaching to his waist. "Fear not! The water is clean and pure." He dived under again, anxious to wash off the dust and sand from his aching body. Without a word, Lamm Ameb walked over to the very edge of the lake and bent down to drink. Beneath the surface, the Darkk could hear water being splashed above him. But whether the Zuttite was drinking or not, he didn't know or care. He rose to the surface.

"You search for some food," Buifra said as he waded out of the water. "I'll go get some dry wood for a fire." Buifra chuckled to himself, wondering where he would find wood that wasn't dry in the middle of the desert. Cleaning his cloak in the water, he glanced back to where he had left Lamm Ameb, he saw that the nomad had already gone to gather some dates for their meal.

By the light of the two moons, Buifra collected a fair amount of wood that he had found lying about at the far end of the lake. But something else was also revealed to him by the moonlight. For there, half buried in a receding sand dune, was what appeared to be a group of artificially carved slabs of rock. Going over to it, Buifra saw that it in reality was some sort of tomb. Most likely, this too had been uncovered by that same accursed storm. Using the fragment of heat-stone he had saved from the shipwreck, the Darkk quickly constructed a torch to get a better look.

The tomb had the appearance of being unbelievably ancient in design and construction. Two ornately carved columns stood next to either side of what was apparently the entrance slab into the tomb. Time and the wind and sand had worn away most of the bas-reliefs and carvings that had at one time covered every inch of the columns. On closer inspection of the entrance slab, Buifra discovered a form of hieroglyphics unlike any he had ever seen before carved upon it. He also noted a large crack between one of the side slabwalls and the entrance slab of the tomb.

Bringing his torch light next to the crack, Buifra could see that it was a little too small for him to slip through. The light of the torch flickered oddly, and the barbarian then smelled the musty odor that issued from the crack in the tomb wall. It was the smell of something that had long been dead. Thrusting the torch momentarily into the crack, Buifra could still see nothing of the tomb's ghostly interior. He shivered in spite of himself.

Why a tomb had been constructed in the middle of nowhere, Buifra had no idea. He was curious to know the reasons why, but he was unable to translate the writing of a civilization that had existed centuries before his great grandfather had ever been born. Even the type of rock the tomb was composed of was somehow unlike any stone or rock that he had ever come upon in all his wanderings.

Then the thought that Lamm Ameb might be able to translate the hieroglyphics presented itself to Buifra. He had nothing to lose by asking. Gathering up the wood he col-

lected earlier, he headed back toward the part of the lake where he had last seen the Zuttite. But not until he had put the still burning torch in by another minor crack in the tomb to guide him here when he returned.

Reaching the spot where they had separated, Buifra found Lamm Ameb already there and waiting for him. Lying on the sand before Ameb was a small pile of dates. Buifra knew it was only his imagination, but if it wasn't for the dates being in front of the Zuttite, he would have sworn that the nomad hadn't moved since he had left.

Again using his fragment of heat-stone, Buifra soon had a good sized blaze going. He tended it for a few moments, and then took a fistful of dates in each hand from the pile that Lamm Ameb had gathered.

"Aren't you going to eat?" mouthed the barbarian who had been surnamed the Darkk. For although the Zuttite sat in easy reach of the dates, he made no sign that he was going to eat them. "Gaaf and Wambreug, you must be just as starved as I am." He poked at the fire with a piece of wood.

"Thank you, barbarian," replied Ameb quietly, "but no, I ate my share before you returned with the wood for the fire." His voice sounded to Buifra like the wind being blown through dry, hollow reeds. "And besides," continued the Zuttite, "I never really cared for eating...dates."

Buifra nodded in assent, aware that the nomad was never going to use more words in his conversation than were absolutely necessary. However, he could not keep himself from staring at Lamm Ameb, who sat opposite him from the fire. He had yet to get a good look at the Zuttite, if Zuttite he truly was. He had been unable to tell as Ameb had made sure, though not noticeably, that the heavy folds of cloth never revealed any part of his body to sight. The silence in which both men sat began to unnerve Buifra, and he decided to ask about the tomb he had discovered.

"Do you know any of the ancient writings of this land?" Buifra began, making another torch as he spoke. The large mound of cloth that sat a few feet away from him moved slightly, and Buifra knew that Ameb was awake and listening.

"That I do, young warrior," answered the Zuttite. "I have learned many forgotten and obscure languages in my treks across the vast deserts of Quanam. Why do you ask?" He abruptly pulled his cloak closer about him.

"I was but wondering if you could decipher some inscriptions I have found not far from here. They're written on an ancient tomb or crypt, and I have to admit that I'm curious as to what the inscriptions say." Interested though he appeared in the writings on the tomb, Buifra was far more interested in the possibility that there might be treasure of some kind hidden within the tomb. But of this train of thought, he said nothing, although Buifra imagined the nomad would be just as greedy for gems and jewels as he was. Nor

would he mind splitting the treasure, if there were any, with Ameb. It was he who had saved his life by bringing him to this oasis of life. There was only one way to find out if

there was treasure, and that would be by returning to the tomb.

"I wouldn't mind doing this for you, if it is all you ask for your protecting me across the desert wastes. Where is this tomb of which you speak?" The Zuttite slowly raised himself off the hard packed sand.

"I'll show you," Buifra said excitedly, lighting the torch with a brand from the fire. "Follow behind me. It's on the far side of the lake." Without another word, the unusually silent nomad began to follow behind him. Too anxious to wait for him, Buifra walked more quickly than Ameb on their way to the tomb. And this time it was Lamm Ameb who

hastened his pace to keep up with the barbarian, who, torch in hand, was heading toward the ancient structure he had found.



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The two torches produced weird and flickering shadows over the tomb entrance as Buifra and Lamm Ameb studied the slab which contained the hieroglyphics. By the added light of the second torch, Buifra could see the tomb more clearly than he had been able to earlier. The tomb was constructed from a substance which closely resembled black marble, al-





though it was evident that no such kind of stone had been carved by human hands for over thousands of years. The Darkk had seen this kind of stone before, although he couldn't remember exactly when or where. Nor did he realize that he would someday see this black stone again.

"Well," he said gruffly, impatient to know what was in the tomb, "can you decipher it or not?"

"I can," replied Ameb, who had been studying the inscriptions for some time now, having brushed the sand away from most of the hieroglyphics that remained intact. "I know this form of writing quite well, though few now know of its existence or how to read it." He turned his cloak covered head to Buifra. "Do you wish to know what it says?"

"Of course I do!" breathed Buifra. "That's why I brought you here to see the tomb. Read on, I implore you!" He moved closer to the Zuttite, with the torchlight hovering over him like spectral eyes.

"Much of what is to be read has been obscured or erased by the sands of time, so I cannot be very specific. But I can translate what I have been able to read like this: It seems that a black sorcerer of the Chjem-ka was entombed here, alive, over eight or nine hundred years ago."

"The Chjem-ka!" swore Buifra, hearing the name of the first race of humans who had lived and died upon Omentis so many thousands of years ago.

"It was one of their kind who was buried here," continued Lamn Ameb, crouching before the entrance slab. "The majority of the inscription is a warning to those who come upon this tomb."

The Zuttite stopped short in his reading as the howl of a desert wolf was heard in the distance. Buifra could not prevent himself from trembling with excitement as he motioned for Ameb to read the warning. The lone wolf had since stopped howling, but neither seemed to notice it.

"It goes on to say that no one should ever dare open the tomb or let it be opened, as the sorcerer within would then be able to escape, being possessed of the power of life everlasting. But it is an unnatural immortality, as this sorcerer would also need men's blood to sustain its unholy half life. Unfortunately, the remainder of what is written has since been erased or filled in by the sand."

"Do you have any knowledge of who was buried here?" inquired Buifra, taking an uneasy glance at the crack in the side of the tomb that had been caused by the weight of the sand being shifted over the centuries. The repulsive odor that issued forth from the crack seemed to press upon him, causing Buifra to back away a few feet from Ameb and the tomb.

"I do," said the Zuttite, rising to his full height. "I know well who was entombed here so long ago, to wait for man or the elements to release him from that black hole in the desert sands. I am surprised that you have not realized who it is by now, as part of his name has been mentioned to you before."

"Who, then?" asked Buifra, unable to control his youthful, yet inane curiosity. Up above, the moons had themselves become buried in the clouds, darkening the strange tableau.

"The one named Lamntrenvisetiz Amebronusucces, black sorcerer of the Chjem-ka."

Then, moving faster than a moment's thought, the cloak covered hands of the undead sorcerer went straight for Buifra's throat.

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His hands prevented from reaching his broadsword or dagger by the unexpected attack, Buifra fought to keep his balance. The undead thing clawed madly at his thickly corded throat, as it tried to fasten its vampirous teeth upon his jugular vein. Buifra himself struggled desperately, noting how the fetid breath of Amebronusucces hideously matched the odor of the tomb he had escaped from. The enveloping death shroud of the Chjem-kan sorcerer hampered Buifra's own attempts to get a grip on the thing's throat.

The veins stood out on the Darkk's forehead as Amebron-

usucces slowly began to cut off the barbarian's intake of air. Buifra knew he would have to break that hold soon or he would eventually black out from lack of air, never to awaken again. With the sorcerer's weight and cloak both pinning him and entangling him, it was impossible for Buifra to reach his weapons. His ears were beginning to ring as his vision faded before him.

If he was going to escape, it would have to be by sheer strength alone. Then Buifra suddenly recalled a tactic that had been shown to him by an old Thekola, when the Darkk had been but a young lad. It was his last chance, for no more air was entering into his lungs, and all was a blood red haze that pounded like a hammer throughout his entire being. And still he stood upright, while the hands of the undead sorcerer closed tighter and tighter about his neck.

Choking with pain, Buifra clenched his hands into fists, making himself believe that they were as hard as rocks. He concentrated on that one thought; that his fists were blocks of stone, able to smash through anything. The red haze was now turning black, but still he continued to concentrate on the power of his fists. It was all he had to use. Concentrate, the witch-woman had told him, for the mind can sometimes be of more strength to the body than any sword or dagger.

Feeling his veins ready to burst with the strain of Amebronusucces' grip around his throat, Buifra swung his fists together to where he imagined the Chjem-kan's head to be. Then, with a sound comparable to a clay urn shattering, he smashed his rock hard fists against the head of Amebronusucces. Blacking out, Buifra prayed that the power of suggestion had as much strength as the Thekola had said it did. For if it did not, he would never awaken again to tell her so.

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Groaning softly, Buifra slowly rolled away from the thing that lay still and silent in the sand, its head shattered like so much pottery. Cold sweat covered the Darkk's nerve racked form as he gulped down huge amounts of the cold night air. He felt for the marks on his throat that were forever to be a reminder of his first meeting with the un-

dead beings that inhabited various areas of all Omentis.

As he rose weakly to his feet, Buifra looked down at what lay before him, still entirely covered with the moulding cloth. He unsheathed his ironite broadsword, for he was not going to take any more chances that the long dead Chjem-kan sorcerer might yet be capable of tearing and maiming for men's blood.

Through it all, the torches had remained burning, and pulling one loose from its niche in the tomb wall, Buifra took it with him to investigate what was left of Amebronusucces. Shuddering because of he knew not what, he tore the cloak away from the corpse with the tip of his sword. Then Buifra leaped back aghast, a blasphemous oath bursting from his lips, and the torch falling from his grasp. He had received his first good look at what had been his companion to this oasis of death.

Buifra's immediate thoughts were to run back to the coast again, far away from this bewitched lake and tomb. This he proceeded to do, his booted feet making little noise in the everlasting sands of Quanam.

For what had attacked him had not been a Zuttite, nor even a Chjem-kan, as he had heard them described. As beneath the burning cloth which had been set afire by the fallen torch lay no man, but an age blackened skeleton with the crushed skull of a wolf. The thing that had introduced itself to Buifra as Lamm Ameh.

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Buifra the Darkk was never sure of how he made it to Kiva alone, and without food or water. Nor did he actually care, for in Kiva he was safe for the moment. He remembered little of what had occurred in the day and night it took him to reach his originally planned destination, having been delirious at the time. There was but one thing that remained stuck in his memory, like a burr sticks upon a goat.

It was when he had been set upon by a pack of wild desert wolves. There had been six of them, yet he had killed them all without receiving a single wound. How he had been able to do it in his condition, he did not know. But for Buifra, it was something well worth remembering. And whatever happened before that, to him, was well worth forgetting.

THE END



Editorial

by STRNAD

Anomaly 1 appears to have been a success. It was very well received by the fans and reviewers both, and many people ordered *Anomaly 2* in advance after seeing #1. I'm heartened and thankful. Still, a few loose ends remain to be tied.

Yes, ERB lovers, Robert Kline's cover painting was from *Thuvia, Maid of Mars*. His s-f strip was written and illustrated by Robert in early 1968 -- you'll notice a marked difference between it and this issue's "Gorvan" strip (which was done around August of last year, 1969). The Archie Goodwin storyboard prelims were reduced slightly; the originals are a full 8 1/2 by 11 inches, rather than the cropped 7 by 9 1/4. I am still trying to locate Lance DeLipski. And, except for one final plea for those who haven't seen the first issue to please order it, that's enough talk about the past.

Anomaly is one of two things, depending upon your point of view. For the comic fans, it is a comic fanzine with considerably better writing and illustration than most comic zines and many professional publications. For the science fiction and sword & sorcery fans, it is an s-f fanzine with an abundance of illustrative, artistic material. Take your pick. The reason for merging these two divergent areas of interest is simple, and primarily egocentric.

I learned to read from comics. (I was able to breeze through "Run, Tip, Run" in school; none of the words even came close to "invulnerable".) Then I was attracted by the strange, unearthly covers on the paperbacks shelved next to the comic rack, and became addicted to science fiction. For years the two media existed peacefully side by side, polluting my brain with equal force and molding it into the warped design it now retains. But then I became involved in fandom, and I discovered the dichotomy between the comics people and the s-f fans, a parting of the ways that seemed most peculiar to me.

Of course, the comics I was first exposed to, outside Superman and Green Lantern, were very heavily oriented towards science fiction to begin with, and I was past the most formulative stages of my life when the super-heroes appeared in *Marvel*. So for me, the media were melted together from the start. And yet it seemed odd that I should entertain a love for both the comic medium and the science fiction field while others viewed it as an either-or affair. Surely Tompkins Sundry of Wichita, Kansas isn't the *only* store to place the paperbacks next to the comic books. But ignoring for the moment those fans who are in a similar situation as myself, I developed a couple of theories that might pertain to the remainder.

First, the super-heroes have reigned supreme during much of comic book history, and super-heroes (whether of Golden Age or *Marvel* variety) have little in common with science fiction. Their "science" borders on fantasy, and yet holds none of the mythical appeal of fantasy fiction. The stories are trite and undemanding in the least, which is requisite for any "literature" being supported by grade schoolers and enjoyed only on the fringes (the fannish level) by older persons. No wonder the average s-f fan grew bored with them early in the game, before he developed a collective mania or learned that Tarzan was better illustrated than Batman. His interest died before his artistic taste could develop, and the mediocre sketches he is now fed by the pro s-f magazines don't help any.



The comic fan, whatever the reason may be that he stayed with the comics, hasn't been exposed to *good* writing through them. (The fact that anyone can learn to enjoy reading after the grueling torture our educational system puts kids through in this field of training is amazing. I'm surprised Fahrenheit 451 isn't the first temperature they memorize.) So if all he has been fed is mediocrity, how can he possibly judge what he sees by any other standards -- that which is least-mediocre becomes the epitome of literary and artistic achievement. A vacuum for quality material has come into existence, and must be filled.

And this is why *Anomaly* exists. The artists are doing what they enjoy, and this is a far better incentive to producing quality work than paying them a token amount to do what the eight-year olds demand. The writers are writing what they want to write, without the need to conform to any ultra-Puritan, senseless restrictions, or to simplify their stories to the point of nothingness. This freedom is the most I can give them. The s-f fans are now being exposed to quality artwork, and the comic fans can see what competent writing produces. Though I have no intention of bringing the two fandoms together into one huge conglomerate, and wouldn't desire such a merging even if it were possible, I do hope that a few horizons can be broadened and that something can be gained by all involved. And I think we can have a lot of good times along the way.

Now another question poses itself: what *form* is *Anomaly* going to take? Slick, thick, annual "superzine" as is the current craze among quality productions? Or fair-to-middling regular fanzine? The answer is another compromise.

Anomaly will contain as many pages as a number of readers paying 75¢ each will support, and will be as regular (striving toward quarterly) as the inflow of quality material will allow. I refuse to compromise on the quality: if one particular issue will be delayed because of a lack of worthwhile material, so be it; but I won't, under any circumstances, put out a fair-to-middling issue for the sake of making some abstract timetable. Each issue will be sold to as many people as possible in as short a time as I can do so: I'd rather take out a month and fill orders and then move on to the next issue than to piddle along at both simultaneously. Which means simply that I'm not going to print many extras; when I run out of the current issue, your subscription will be extended.

So that is where things stand. If you like it, fine; if you don't, offer alternatives. I'm always open to advice, criticism, and any new directions you'd like to try. Artists and authors are welcomed and wanted, but please include full return postage if you want your stuff back. And if you're a poet, well, *Riverside Quarterly's* a fine publication.

THE MASKED LIZARD



INTRODUCTION

I have to admit it -- I'm hooked on Bode'. My habit dates back to my junior year in high school, on a day when I was about to die in the cultural vacuum of trig class, when, within the pages of a dubious looking paperback titled *Wonder Wart-Hog, Captain Crud & Other Super Stuff*, I discovered a strange looking beastie with a bill that looked like a smashed country mail box. "The Masked Lizard" by Vaughn Bode'! And by surprise the strip was creative, original--something generally lacking in today's comic strips. I consumed it quickly, delighting in every brief moment. From that

moment on I've been hooked. "The Machines", "The Man", "The Junkwaffel Invasion of Kruppenny Island", "Cheech Wizard", "Deadbone", "The Race to the Moon" and more came my way by fair means or foul, and now *Galaxy* has become similarly enslaved to the Bode' habit--a development as psyche-shattering as that initial exposure ages ago. And now once again, here is Vaughn Bode's first published work, "The Masked Lizard". Read it, fellow addicts, in fond remembrance. And if you're new to the Bode' scene, well, you've got a long, enjoyable, and perfectly legal habit ahead of you!

THE MASKED LIZARD

BY VAUGHN BODE



A GENERAL INTRODUCTION FOR THE LAYMAN TO 'HOMO INTELLIGENS LIZARDUS'

WE BEGIN BY STATING HOW VERY RARE THIS PARTICULAR SPECIES OF LIZARD IS. AS FAR AS IS KNOWN, THIS IS THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND ON EARTH. THAT THE REPTILE COMES FROM ANOTHER SOLAR SYSTEM IS ESTABLISHED FACT, ALTHOUGH SOME DOUBT EXISTS AS TO THE STAR'S POSITION IN RELATION TO OUR PLANET.

BEFORE THE LIZARD'S HISTORY IS RELATED, LET US CONSIDER, IN LAYMAN'S TERMS OF COURSE, AN ANATOMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL SKETCH.

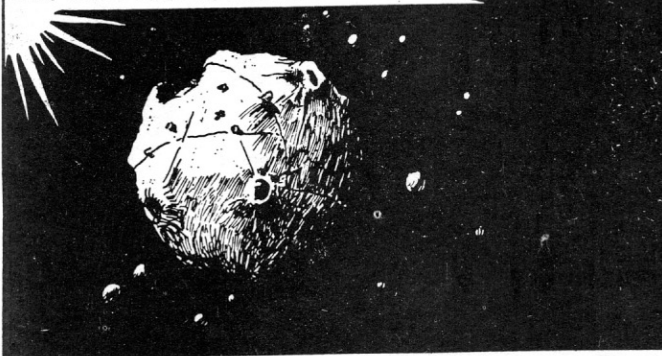
WE FIND THAT IT STANDS NEARLY 4 FEET IN HEIGHT AND WEIGHS 102 LBS. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT ITS EPIDERMIS IS A PLEASING TROPICAL GREEN.

THE LIZARD'S DIET SEEMS TO CONSIST OF SALADS, ALCOHOL AND NICOTINE IN VARIOUS AMOUNTS. WHY THIS IS, WE CANNOT SAY, HOWEVER ONE NOTED BIOLOGIST RECENTLY SUGGESTED THAT; "THIS ODD DIET QUITE PROBABLY IS REQUIRED BECAUSE OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD ON THE CREATURE'S INTESTINES."

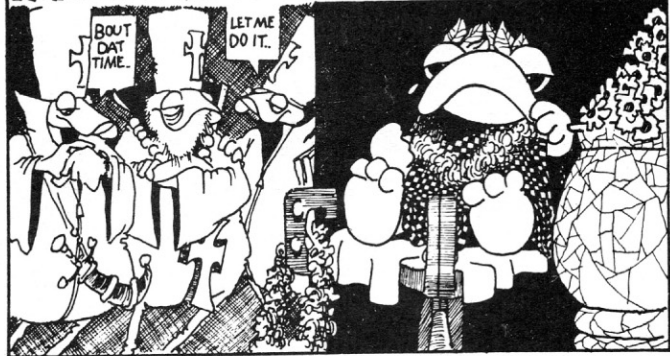
PERSONALLY, I DISAGREE AND THINK IT MAY BE DUE TO MORAL DECAY, BUT THEN THAT IS NOT MY BEST DEPARTMENT EITHER...

WELL, NOW THAT WE HAVE A GENERAL VIEW OF THE LIZARD AS REGARDS ITS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, WE MUST PUSH ON FOR A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY.

IT'S JULY 22, 1941 IN THE SYSTEM OF BUN 505, ON THE PLANET, 'SALMANDRIA'...



A LITTLE LIZARD IS HATCHED OUT TO A WORLD OF SUPERSTITION AND DOGMA. HE IS UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE EGG NO. 13 OF BATCH 007. HE IS IMMEDIATELY SLATED AS A SACRIFICIAL OFFERING TO THE HOLY SUN GOD, 'BELCH'...



A HIGH PRIEST ANOINTS THE LIZARD CHILD, STUFFS HIM INTO THE DAILY SACRIFICE SHELL AND FIRES HIM OFF THE PLANET INTO THE SUN. FATE IS BY THE SAINTLY REPTILE'S SIDE FOR AT ONE POINT A METORITE BOUNCES THE CAPSULE OUT OF ITS PREDESTINED COURSE...



TIME PASSES AS THE SHELL BUMPS ALONG ACROSS THE CHUBBYNESS OF SPACE. THE LIZARD SLEEPS.

THEN SUDDENLY, FIVE YEARS LATER, A NEW SOLAR-HOOD IS ENTERED AND THE SMALL SHIP IS SOON CAPTURED IN THE EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD!!



ON NOV. 4, 1946 AT 3 AM. GREENWICH TIME, THE SPACE CAPSULE CRASHES THROUGH THE DOME OF THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY OBSERVATORY, KILLING AN OBSCURE PROFESSOR, AND IMBEDS ITSELF IN THE CAMPUS SEWER SYSTEM!!



50 YEARS FLEW BY AND THE LIZARD GREW FROM A MERE ORPHAN INTO A HORRIBLE EXAMPLE OF HIS RACE. HE CAME TO LOVE THE ABOMINABLE SEWERS AS HOME AND WAS EVEN ABLE TO EDUCATE HIMSELF BY LISTENING TO ECHOED LECTURES AND READING VARIOUS PRINTED REFUSE THAT FREQUENTLY IS WASHED INTO THE SYSTEM...



HE RENOVATED A PORTION OF UNFINISHED CESS-POOL AND THERE WASTED HIS ENERGY ON STUDIOUS PERSUITS UNTILL ONE NIGHT HE IS APROACHED BY THE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION CALLED THE U.S.C.I.A. THEY ENLIST THE LIZARD AS A SECRET AGENT WITH A LICENCE TO KILL!!!



FOR TWO YEARS NOW, THE LIZARD HAS LABORED DILLIGENTLY WITH THE U.S.C.I.A. ELIMINATING ALL FORMS OF SOCIALLY OR POLITICALLY UNDESIRABLE CHARACTERS.

THEY SWEAR THAT HIS LOYALTY WILL NOT GO UNOTICED, THAT INDEED HE ONE DAY SHALL BECOME A FULL FLEGGED CITIZEN OF THESE UNITED STATES!!

THAT IN ITSELF DOESN'T PARTICULARLY IMPRESS HIM, BUT IT'S SOMETHING NICE FOR LIZARDS.

THE U.S.C.I.A. CHIEF, HARRY VAN LOON, HAS ONLY ONE PROBLEM WITH HIS SPECIAL AGENT AND THAT IS THE LIZARD'S IMPOSSIBLE SUPERMAN COMPLEX. WE FIND THAT OUR HERO HAS DONNED A SUIT AN CAPE AND NOW GOES BY THE NAME OF: THE

'MASKED LIZARD'!!

OUR STORY BEGINS AS THE MASKED LIZARD IS IDLY SLOSHING DOWN THE MAIN SEWER LINE THAT RUNS BENEATH THE CAMPUS QUAD... HE IS IN A REFLECTIVE AND SOMEWHAT GLOOMY MOOD AS HE PONDERES THE MANY PRESSING PROBLEMS WHICH MUST BE SOLVED.



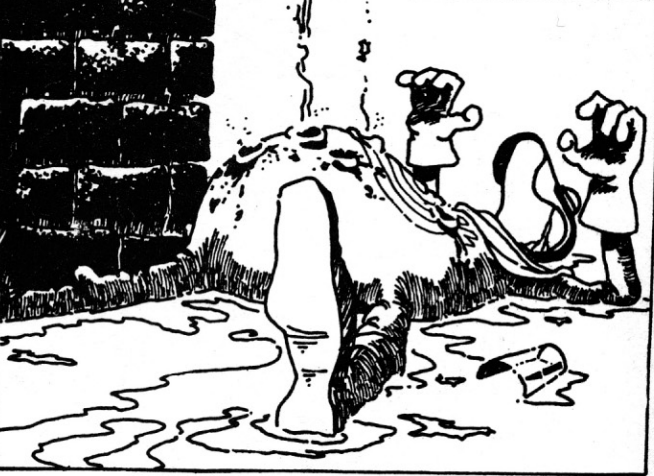
SUDDENLY AND WITHOUT PREVIOUS WARNING!!



MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE U.S. CIA ORGANIZATION, A CONVERSATION IS TAKING PLACE!!



NOW BACK TO THE SEWERS WHERE WE JOIN THE DASHING MASKED LIZARD!!



THE NEXT DAY WE FIND OUR HEROIC REPTILE HAS SUAVELY RECOVERED FROM HIS IMPLOD WOUNDS... LUCKILY THE FOURTEEN BULLETS MISSED HIS VITAL ORGANS...

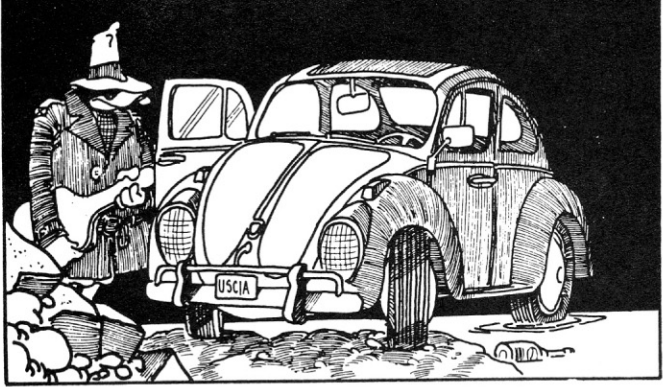


HA! NONE MORE TINCYNIP NEVER HURTS A LIZARD... ..SO, THEY THINK THEY RUBBED OUT ALL. EH? THA BOTTLES GONE?! ANYWAY, THEY IS THE RECENTLY CREATED ORGANIZATION THAT'S BEEN FLOWERN OFF MY RACIAL DIFFERENCE.. THEM CALLS THEMSELFS: "LIZARD ASSASSINATIONS LIMITED". HA, DATS A LAUGH ALL RIGHT...

I THINK I IS GONNA GO PAY 'L.A. LIMITED' A QUIET LITTLE VISIT... MOOHOO! UMM, LET ME SEE HERE, I'LL USE MY TRUSTY OLD 9MM GERMAN SCHMESSER. THIS IS THE PARACHUTE MODEL ACTUALLY, YOU CANT BEAT A FOLDING STOCK.. THINK I'LL TAKE SEMI-ARMOR PIERCING AMMO HA!



HOURS LATER, AFTER THE MASKED LIZARD REGAINS CONSCIOUSNESS FROM BUMPING HIS HEAD AGAINST A PARTICULARLY LOW PIPE, WE FIND HE HAS CHANGED INTO HIS FAMOUS DISGUISE AND IS LOADING UP THE 'LIZARD MOBILE'..



HE ROARS OFF THROUGH THE SEWER AND OUT INTO THE SUNLIT WORLD OF HOMOSEXUALS HOMO SAPIENS... THREE FINES, SIX MANHATTANS AND A BLOWN TRANSMISSION LATER HE COMES TO AN UNOBSERVED HALT IN FRONT OF "LIZARD ASSASSINATIONS LIMITED'S" HEADQUARTERS..



DISGUISED AS HE IS, THE MASKED LIZARD SLIPS UNNOTICED INTO THE BUILDING. HE SNEAKS STEALTHY UP TO THE SECOND FLOOR WHERE A TOP-LEVEL MEETING OF LIZARD ASSASSINS IS TAKING PLACE...

WELL, I TELL YOU I'M GLAD WE BUMPED THA DAMN FROG, BUT WHERE WE GO FROM HERE?

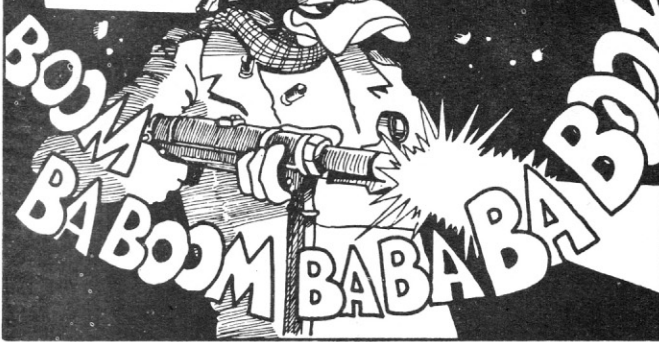


A GREAT CRASH AS THE DOOR IS THROWN OPEN AND THERE STANDS THE MIGHTY MASKED LIZARD IN FULL GLORY!!



WITHOUT RESERVATIONS AND MISGIVINGS THE NOBLE MASKED LIZARD BEGINS A METHODIC MACHINE GUNNING OF 'L.A. LTD.'S ORGANIC LIMBS AN MEMBERS.

HO HO HO!
LOOKIT EM'
BOUNCING AN
FLOPPIN'!!



UNFORTUNATELY THE 'SCHMEISSER' JAMS IN MID-KILLING.. THE SITUATION HAS BECOME HAIRY! THE MASKED LIZARD WHIPS OUT HIS MODEL 1917.48 CAL. REVOLVER TEARING HIS BELOVED U.S.G.I.A. TRENCH COAT!!

ACK I'VE TORN
MY BELOVED
USCIA
TRENCH
COAT!!



A TERRIFIC BATTLE ENSUES!..CRASHES, BANGS, SCREAMS AND FLASHES ARE EMITTING FROM THE DARKENED ROOM..THE QUICK THINKING LIZARD CUNNINGLY TURNED OFF THE LIGHTS TO CONFUSE THE ASSASSINS...

YOOO HOOOO!
YECH!
POOM POOM JEEEEEAH!
POOM CRACK OH GOD
EXCUSE ME GAH CRACK OH GOD
OH GOD
BAM POW POW
THAT YOU MORRIE

AN HOUR LATER, THE LIGHTS COME ON TO REVEAL OUR CONFUSED, DAZED AND MORTALLY WOUNDED REPTILE BUMPING AIMLESSLY AROUND THE ROOM...



THE REMAINING MEMBERS SEIZE THE MASKED LIZARD, NAIL HIM TO THE WALL, STUFF HAND GRENADES IN HIS MOUTH, PULL THE PINS AND TAKE OFF INTO THE DARKNESS...



THE SECOND STORY OF THE ASSASSINS HEADQUARTERS IS COMPLETELY DECATIMATED AS THE TWELVE CONCUSSION GRENADES EXPLODE IN QUICK SUCCESSION WHILE STUFFED IN THE MOUTH OF OUR SAINTLY HERO.



HAPPILY THE DETONATIONS DIDN'T APPRECIABLY DAMAGE ANY OF THE MASKED LIZARD'S INTERNAL ORGANS KEEP IN MIND TOO, THE FACT THAT GRENADES THEORETICALLY EXPLODE OUTWARD...WE PICK UP OUR STORY ON THE FOLLOWING DAY WHERE A MOCK FUNERAL HAS TAKEN PLACE IN ORDER TO LURE THE LAST FANATICS OF L.A. LTD. INTO AMBUSH...THE REPTILE SLIPLY WAITS NEAR THE BAIT..



SUDDENLY, AN HOUR LATER THE GUYS ARRIVE TO DESECRATE THE MASKED LIZARD'S SUPPOSED GRAVE...



QUICKLY, ASSASSINS, WE MUST DESECRATE THE MASKED LIZARD'S SUPPOSED GRAVE...

THEY DESECRATE AWAY, UNTIL ONE CASUALTY OPENS THE CASKET...THE TRUTH IS OUT, HIS GRAVE IS ONLY A FRONT, A DIABOLICALLY CLEVER AMBUSH!!

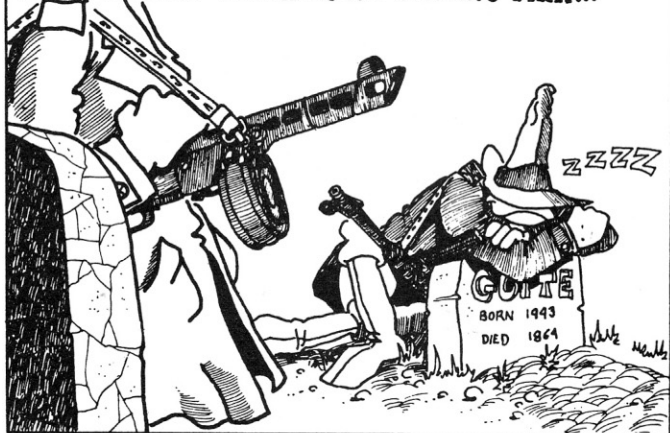


OKAY MASKED LIZARD YOU GOT US, WE KNOW YOU IS OUT THERE... WE SURRENDER... SEE? WE GOT OUR LITTLE HANDS UP!!

COMRADE, COMRADE, DON'T FIRE!!

SHUT UP YOU SLIMY COWARD... DIE VIGOROUSLY...

HOWEVER, AFTER A FEW MINUTES OF BEWILDERMENT THE ASSASSINS DISCOVER THE WAITING PLACE OF THE MASKED LIZARD! IT SEEMS HE HAS GONE TO SLEEP WHILE WAITING TO SPRING HIS CUNNING TRAP...



NATURALLY NO TIME IS WASTED IN DUTIFULLY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION...THEY DISPATCH THE MASKED LIZARD WITH MURDEROUS FIRE FROM THEIR RUSSIAN MODEL 40 MACHINE PISTOLS... THEY BURY THE BODY A FEW MINUTES LATER, HAPPY IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THIS WAS FITTING IRONY FOR THE DUMB LIZARD...



LATE THAT NIGHT, IF ONE HAD CHANCED TO PASS THAT DESOLATE GRAVEYARD, ONE MIGHT HAVE HEARD THE MUFFLED SINGING OF OUR ENTOMBED AGENT... AMEN..



THE END
CASE NO. 21

ROBERT E. HOWARD

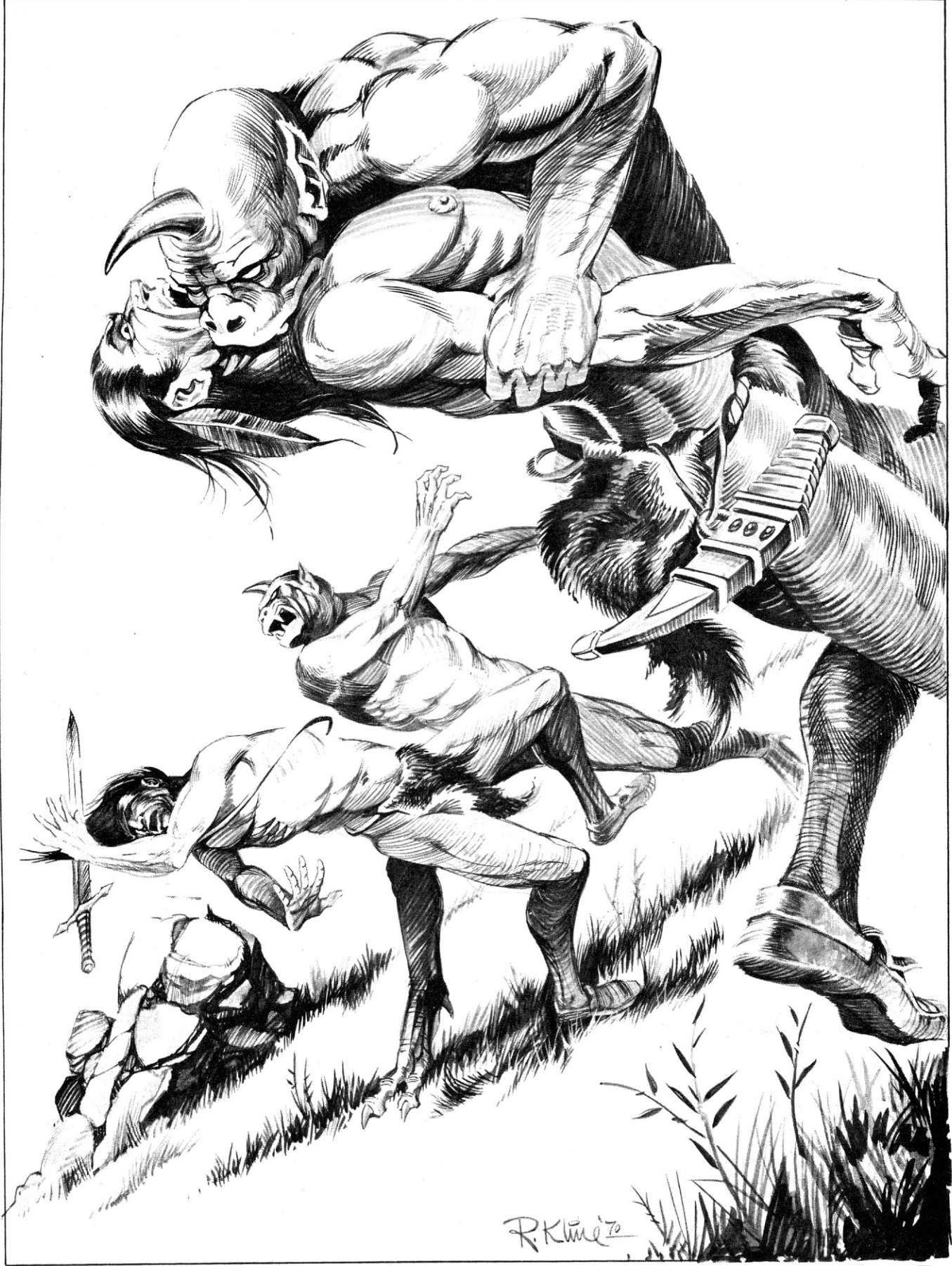


part two of a folio by
ROBERT KLINE



"Before him, swaying like a sapling in the wind, stood a woman."
The Frost Giant's Daughter





"Shrieking and howling, the demons raced hither and yon, at every stride striking down a Pict with a sweep of those talons."



"Then the rest were on him, in a night-
mare rush of blazing eyes and dripping
fangs."
Queen of the Black Coast

R. Meyer